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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 DAR ES SALAAM 000972

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 5/15/15

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SUBJECT: SALIM SALIM SOUNDS OFF ON ELECTIONS, POLITICAL
MACHINATIONS, PROSPECTS FOR VIOLENCE IN ZANZIBAR

REF: DAR ES SALAAM 0908 and previous

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Michael S. Owen for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: In a wide-ranging two-hour lunch meeting, former OAU Secretary General Salim Salim told us he had failed to capture the CCM presidential nomination because of strong opposition from the Zanzibari faction of the CCM. Salim, who is a Zanzibari of Arab heritage, accused some party members of "reverse racism" because they had considered him "insufficiently African" to become President. Salim acknowledged that Foreign Minister Jakaya Kikwete had run a strong campaign to capture the nomination, but charged that "lots of money" had changed hands and lots of promises had been made, many of which are unlikely to be kept. Salim blasted Zanzibari President Karume as a "lightweight," and said in a free vote he would not even have captured the party's nomination. Mohammed Bilal, who had also been vying for the Zanzibari presidential nomination, had been "heavily pressured" to withdraw, Salim said, but this could backfire in the general election by further weakening Karume's support among CCM party faithful. If a free and fair election were held today, he said, CUF would almost certainly win the Zanzibari presidency. Die-hards in the CCM are fighting to ensure that does not happen, Salim said, and violence during and after the elections in Zanzibar is almost certain unless Karume can exercise strong leadership in the weeks ahead. End Summary.

2. (U) Charge joined the Belgian Ambassador and UK and Canadian High Commissioners for a March 12 lunch meeting with former OAU Secretary General and recently defeated presidential aspirant Salim Salim. Salim, who is also a former Foreign Minister, had been considered a strong candidate but ultimately finished second to current Foreign Minister Jakaya Kikwete in the ruling CCM party's presidential nominating convention (ref).

Party Heavyweights Maneuver Behind the Scenes

3. (C) Salim provided a detailed accounting of the machinations undertaken during the CCM's nominating party convention, leading to Kikwete's nomination. Although much debate and the final vote were public, he said, the real decisions were made in closed-door meetings chaired by President and party chairman Mkapa. Candidates were not allowed in some of these meetings, Salim said, so even though the public events gave the impression of open-ness and transparency, there was in fact considerable opacity to many of the decisions.

4. (C) Salim was particularly incensed over one such closed-door meeting in which his own candidacy was debated by the party's Central Committee. Salim was not allowed into the meeting, but had heard details of the proceedings from one of his supporters. Salim said his candidacy had been attacked by the Zanzibari contingent of the CCM, who complained that Salim was "an Arab," and "insufficiently African" to become president. He claimed that one delegate said that "Salim's skin is not black enough" ever to become president of Tanzania. Salim expressed considerable bitterness over this episode, particularly the fact that Mkapa let it continue and did not try to intervene or rebut these arguments.

5. (C) Salim also told us that in the weeks leading up to the party convention, the CCM leadership had repeatedly said that strong anti-corruption credentials would be a requirement to obtain the party's nomination. During the initial Central Committee meeting however, Mkapa had downplayed corruption as a factor, saying at one point that "nobody's completely clean." When party Vice-chairman John Malacela was unexpectedly eliminated in the first round by the Central Committee, Mkapa could have sent a strong message by using Malacela's dubious record on corruption as a justification for his elimination; instead, Mkapa simply said that Malacela was "too old" and "not electable." According to Salim, this was a clear signal that corruption would not be a determining factor in selection of the nominee, and took the wind out of the sails of the CCM's anti-corruption contingent.

Kikwete: Lots of Money, Lots of Promises

16. (C) Salim acknowledged that Kikwete had run an energetic and skillful campaign, and deserved to win the nomination. Kikwete had done a particularly good job of traveling throughout the countryside and enlisting the support of youth groups. On the other hand, Salim said, a lot of money had changed hands and a lot of promises had been made by Kikwete in the process, and many such promises would be next to impossible to keep. Once Kikwete takes office and begins making appointments, he said, there will be "a mad scramble" with many disappointed supporters left with nothing. Salim also said - with a certain degree of admiration - that Kikwete had "done a good job" of paying off the press to ensure nothing but a steady stream of favorable press reporting.

Karume's Nomination Heightens Tensions Within CCM

17. (C) Turning to Zanzibar, Salim admitted that the process for re-nominating current Zanzibari President Karume once again was "not very democratic." Karume faced a very tough challenge from Mohammed Bilal, a protege of former Zanzibari president Salmin Amour; in a free and fair vote in the CCM Central Committee or on the floor of the party convention, Bilal would almost certainly have trounced Karume, according to Salim. Mkapa and Kikwete had both placed "extremely heavy pressure" on Bilal, and in the end he had crumbled and dropped out of the race, handing the nomination to Karume. This could ultimately backfire, Salim said, because many Bilal supporters were now embittered and would find it difficult to support Karume. Although they would be unlikely to support the opposition party CUF, they could well stay at home on election day, thus weakening Karume's vote count.

18. (C) Salim was particularly critical of Karume, terming him a "political lightweight" who had achieved his position only because of his historic name. Salim explained a key Kikwete/Karume nexus: Kikwete had supported Karume's nomination over former president Amour in 2000, which was the critical boost Karume needed to catapult into the Zanzibar presidency. Karume thus was obliged to support Kikwete's candidacy over fellow Zanzibari Salim. According to Salim, Karume's popularity in Zanzibar had steadily waned since 2005, and if a free and fair election were held today, Karume would almost certainly lose to CUF candidate Sharif Seif Hamad.

Crisis looms in Zanzibar

19. (C) Salim expressed grave concern over the prospects for electoral violence on Zanzibar. Die-hards in the Zanzibari CCM recognize Karume's weakness, and will pull out all the stops to assure his victory, he said. Similarly, the CUF rank and file believes they were robbed of victory in 1995 and 2000, and are vowing never to let this happen again. Both sides will "do everything possible" to win, and each will erupt if it feels it has been cheated at the polls. Salim said that the Zanzibari wings of both parties have "too many hot-heads" who are only concerned about victory, and are not looking at the possible consequences of another questionable election.

110. (C) The next three months will be critical, said Salim, and will above all require strong leadership and statesmanship from Karume. If Karume can reach out to Bilal supporters and bring them back into the fold, this will strengthen his position and make it more likely he can negotiate some sort of power-sharing arrangement with CUF. Conversely, failure to reach out to Bilal will make it even more likely Karume's supporters will resort to intimidation, violence, and fraud to win the election, thus making post-election chaos almost inevitable. Salim reiterated the crucial importance of leadership from Karume, but his skepticism on this front was all too clear.

Comment

111. (C) Comment: Although Salim's remarks were no doubt influenced to some extent by his disappointment at not capturing the presidential nomination, they ring generally true. In particular, the approaching train wreck in Zanzibar is of growing general concern, and Salim's analysis tracks very closely with ours. We also share his skepticism over President Karume's ability - or inclination - to exert strong leadership and avoid a crisis. We have

discussed these concerns with several like-minded diplomatic missions here and are planning a series of meetings with both Karume and Kikwete to ensure they fully understand the consequences of another fraudulent election in Zanzibar, and to encourage them to take action now to calm tensions and avert a crisis. End Comment.

OWEN